

F-1-307

Cosumnes River Floodplain Acquisitions and Management

I. Executive Summary

a. Project title: Cosumnes River Floodplain Acquisitions and Management

Applicants: The Nature Conservancy and the California Wildlife Conservation Board

b. Project description and primary biological/ecological objectives

The project proposes a block grant totaling \$20,670,000 for acquisition and enhancement of approximately 11,000 acres of fisheries, riparian, and wetland habitats along the lower Cosumnes River floodplain and adjacent Delta lands.

The primary use of the requested funds will be for the acquisition, initial restoration, and conservation stewardship of properties rich in actual or potential habitat value and important to the long-term health of this part of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. The applicants propose to buy some properties outright and add them to the Cosumnes River Preserve, and to acquire conservation easement interests in others.

Additional funds are requested for initial restoration and stewardship activities and for a proportional contribution to the Cosumnes River Preserve's endowment to assist with long-term management costs.

The primary biological/ecological objectives of this proposal are to:

- protect existing riparian, wetland, and aquatic habitats and associated species.
- reestablish riparian, wetland, and aquatic habitats through restoration of natural processes and expansion of the floodplain.
- facilitate population expansion of species associated with the Cosumnes, particularly eastside tributary fall-run salmon, splittail, sandhill cranes, neotropical migrant bird species, and waterfowl.

c. Approach/tasks/schedule

The proposed approach is to acquire fee or easement interests from willing sellers on properties that are contiguous to the Cosumnes River Preserve, have high habitat values, and/or offer conservation managers excellent opportunities to expand the floodway and restore the riparian corridor of the lower Cosumnes River.

The project will complete the acquisition of key properties currently under option to The Nature Conservancy and secure conservation easements or options on additional high-priority parcels. Initial restoration, stewardship, and management activities will be initiated as properties are acquired. New breaching of levees within the floodplain is not a part of this project; however, the successful completion of this project is a requirement for that restoration action to occur. We expect to complete the program proposed here within two years. The project will submit quarterly financial and programmatic reports to CALFED.

d. Justification for project

The land acquisitions and conservation management activities proposed here will protect and expand tidal wetlands, seasonally flooded wetlands, the riparian corridor, perennial grasslands and farmland of high habitat value. This proposal addresses at least seven priority stressors and

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benefits numerous species of concern to CALFED. These activities will also improve water quality and will have broad ecosystem benefits.

e. Budget costs and third-party impacts

Total cost for the program described here is approximately \$28,470,000. Identified cost-sharing funds total approximately \$7,800,000. The net amount requested is \$20,670,000. More than \$30 million has been spent on the Cosumnes project to date.

There are no known negative third-party impacts from the activities for which we are requesting funding.

f. Applicant qualifications

The Nature Conservancy and the California Wildlife Conservation Board, have extensive experience in property acquisition, habitat restoration, and land management.

g. Monitoring and data evaluation

The project proposes to expand the extensive habitat evaluation and species monitoring programs already in operation at the Cosumnes River Preserve to these new properties as they are added to the Preserve. We will develop specific reporting requirements in consultation with CALFED staff.

h. Local support/coordination with other programs/compatibility with CALFED objectives

The Cosumnes River Preserve was dedicated in 1987. Preserve staff and volunteers have developed extensive community support in a decade of working with local and regional schools, community groups, and public agencies. The Sacramento County General Plan supports expansion of the Preserve, and the expansion proposed here will in turn help the county achieve some of the plan's objectives.

The activities proposed are compatible with the objectives of CALFED, the nine agencies and partners of the Cosumnes project, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture, and the Wetland Reserve Program.

Several other organizations' proposals to CALFED in response to this RFP have been coordinated with this proposal, including proposals from the Sacramento Local Conservation Corps, Phil Williams and Associates, the Bureau of Land Management, and Ducks Unlimited. Their funding would assist us in implementing our program. However, our proposal is not contingent on funding of these proposals. Moreover, the elements of this proposal (with a few exceptions, detailed in Section IV-a of this proposal) can be funded separately or in phases.